

FRANCE: IS DE GAULLE FASCIST?

The Nature of His Threat to the Fourth Republic

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ON THE morrow of the recent French municipal elections, an arrogant and impatient voice was heard in France. It declared peremptorily: "The present National Assembly must be dissolved as soon as possible. . . ." And added threateningly: "Events are too menacing to permit any delay. . . . Those who, having the authority to adopt the necessary measures for transition, avoid taking them . . . in order to prolong the present ill-fated regime will incur literally crushing responsibilities."

Stepping into the limelight at a press conference some weeks later, the voice's owner, General Charles de Gaulle, made crystal-clear his contempt for the majority of the present elected representatives of the French people: "The wave is launched. . . . I can only be sorry for those who don't want to understand it. If they want to fight against this force, which recalls certain analogous forces that at times during our history . . . have swept away all before them . . . very well, they will be swept away! And if they

want to stand on the shore hopelessly wailing . . . their criticisms and curses will no more matter than spitting in the ocean." Adding a few further remarks on the need for dissolving the French Communist party and controlling the trade unions, he stalked off back into his momentary retirement at Colombey-les-Deux-Églises.

People to whom such statements sounded like a nightmare echo of the declarations of Hitler around 1931 and 1932 began to have the jitters. They asked: Is this a new fascist leader? Will he come to power? Does it mean anti-Jewish persecutions in France? And above all, they asked in tones of hurt surprise: How could this happen? How could the man of the 18th June, the gallant liberator of France, change and talk like a man aspiring to be a dictator?

The plain fact of the matter is that there are no grounds for surprise. De Gaulle has not changed any more than, say, Stalin has changed. His present behavior grows logically out of his whole past life, beliefs, and activities. His record has always been there to be looked at by anyone who wanted to take the trouble to do so. If it was not broadly publicized, it is because the Allied press and propaganda services covered it up. The Allied censorship, for instance, mercilessly killed news-cable references to the persecution of non-Gaullist French resisters at 10 Duke Street in Britain.

BEHIND the shifting French political scene stands the figure of Charles de Gaulle, wartime leader of the Free French and now a serious contender for national power. Here SHERRY MANGAN, who has lived in Paris since his graduation from Harvard in 1925, analyzes the political significance of de Gaulle and his movement, the Rassemblement du Peuple Français. Mr. Mangan has served for over ten years as Paris correspondent for *Time*. He left Paris during the war, when he was expelled by the Nazis from German-occupied Europe. After an assignment in South America, he returned to France and has again taken up his permanent residence there. Mr. Mangan has published experimental poetry and criticism in numerous little magazines, and for a time edited his own review, *Pagany*, which attracted wide attention in the early 1930's. Mr. Mangan was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1904.

CHARLES-ANDRÉ-JOSEPH-MARIE DE GAULLE began life as a classic royalist. France, like Germany, has a solid century-old tradition of reactionary mystical nationalism, in which the old parallel nationalist current of liberal-progressive ideas originated by the French Revolution has long since been dissolved. French history has known such wor-

thy representatives of this nationalist mystique as the anti-Dreyfusard mobs at the end of the last century, the Camelots du Roi after 1918, the Croix du Feu, who made their bid for power on February 6, 1934, and the Cagoulaards, famous for their vicious attacks on Léon Blum. Their direct linear descendants are those "gilded youths" who, after de Gaulle's inflammatory Mont-Valérien speech on June 17, 1946, marched—shouting: "De Gaulle to power! Thorez to the gallows!"—to the headquarters of the French Communist party in the Square de Châteaudun, looted the bookshop, and made a Hitlerian-style bonfire of the books in the street.

By 1931, de Gaulle's original royalism had given place to a more general mystique of "the Leader," and his personal ambition had begun to grow fiercely, as can be seen in his most important piece of writing to that date, a long article titled "On Prestige." This extraordinary and almost unknown piece, which should be read in its entirety for a full understanding of the man's mind, deserves lengthy citation. It begins:

"Our times are hard on authority. Customs break it down, laws tend to weaken it. . . . In the home as in the workshops, in the State as in the street, it arouses impatience and criticism rather than trust and subordination. . . . Such a crisis, general though it appears, can last only a certain time. Men, at bottom, cannot get along without being ruled. . . . These political animals need organization, that is, order and chiefs. If authority is tottering on shaken foundations, the natural equilibrium of things will find others, sooner or later, better or worse, and in any case suited to the establishment of a new discipline. . . . All the credit the masses once accorded to position or birth, they give now only to those who have known how to impose themselves. What legitimate prince was ever obeyed like such-and-such a dictator who has emerged from nothing save his own audacity?"

This is strong language, and had its writer's future been suspected, it would have made a sensation. But buried as it was in the pages of the technical *Revue Militaire*

Française, it passed almost unnoticed. De Gaulle himself, however, believed in his star, and it was certainly of his future self that he went on to speak: "The fact is that certain men spread about them . . . a fluid of authority, concerning which it is hard to see of what it consists even while undergoing its effects. . . ."

There follow prescriptions of how the leader should behave—his reserve, silences, personal appearance, daring—which read like the daily newspapers' description of the 1947 de Gaulle. The author assures his readers—and no doubt himself—that real leaders spread about them "a magnetism of confidence and even of illusion. For those who follow them, they personify the goal, incarnate hope. The devotion of little men, concentrated on their person, confuses the success of the enterprise with the joy of satisfying them." They are no saints, in de Gaulle's view, "evangelic perfection does not lead to empire. The man of action is scarcely conceivable without a strong dose of egotism, of pride, of harshness, of trickery. But all this is forgiven him and even makes him stand out in greater relief if he uses it to accomplish great things."

The general conclusions of this remarkable article were that the pendulum would swing back against the excessive democracy of the Third Republic, though he was naturally too prudent to call it by name: "The time is just passing when the cult of money excommunicates all others. The balance of events tends toward equilibrium, and in a clatter of failures, scandals, and prosecutions, brings moral values back into the broad day of public respect."

And who would accomplish this? The armed forces. And behind the armed forces, the still shadowy Leader.

DE GAULLE first came to public attention in the troubled year of 1934, when royalist and nationalist reactionary bands rioted bloodily on the Place de la Concorde and forced the resignation of the government. His volume, *Vers l'armée de métier*, though no popular success, aroused great interest in

high places, and particularly in the mind of Paul Reynaud. Hailed somewhat tardily in 1940 as a brilliant text on the use of armor, its main underlying idea is actually political.

De Gaulle had witnessed the French Army mutinies in 1917, and had fought in Poland in 1919-20 against a mutinying Red Army; both were mass conscript armies. In the France of 1934, when the political tension between Left and Right was reaching a pitch that threatened civil war, and the reliability of citizen levies became a matter of considerable doubt, he conjectured whether it would not be possible to replace mass conscript armies, subject to political beliefs and crises, by a small, powerful professional army swayed only by a leader: "A WEAPON FOR REPRESSIVE AND PREVENTIVE ACTION — that is what we have to provide for ourselves. . . . These professional troops must have nothing to bind them: neither habits, interests, nor family ties. . . . During the calling up of reservists, the distribution of immense quantities of equipment, and the numberless movements and manipulations which these operates involve, the slightest unrest is fraught with danger. . . ."

A section on the leader cult sounds singularly autobiographical. One can easily sense the wistful impatience of the still relatively unnoticed young officer: "Whatever may be the effect on the value of leaders of more liberal training and wider autonomy, the essential thing will remain, as always, the personal hidden efforts of those who aspire to command. . . . Destined to leave their impress rather than to receive one, they build up in the secrecy of their inner life the structure of their feelings, of their ideas, of their will. His faculties, shaped for heroic feats, despise the pliability, the intrigues, and the parade through which the most brilliant careers are achieved in peace time. And so he would be condemned to emasculation or corruption if he lacked the grim impulse of ambition to spur him on. It is not, to be sure, that the passion for rank and honors, which is only careerism, possesses him, but it is, beyond doubt, the hope of playing a great role in great events!" It must have seemed lonely

and long to wait, to this strange gangling man, filled with a fire of belief in himself and a gnawing ambition. The time itself seemed unfavorable. But he believed in a reaction and he believed in his star. He went on: "For a thousand reasons, a change must come. . . . A leader will have to appear. . . . For the sword is the axis of the world, and greatness cannot be shared. . . . For glory gives herself only to those who have always dreamed of her."

He did not have as long to wait as he feared. In 1940, in the last shake-up of his cabinet before passing power over to Pétain, Premier Paul Reynaud called on de Gaulle, freshly promoted to general's rank, to assist him in the War Ministry as sub-secretary of state. In little over a month the collapse occurred; de Gaulle, after trying to persuade his old friend and hero Pétain not to sign the armistice, fled to England and broadcast his famous declaration, "France has lost only a battle, it has not lost the war!"; and his chance had come to create that leadership of personal power of which he had dreamed.

IT WAS not smooth going. Soon after arriving in England he announced "that he was taking under his authority all Frenchmen finding themselves in British territory or coming thereto." But the Churchill-de Gaulle agreement signed August 7, 1940, forced him to retreat and limit himself to volunteers. Yet he succeeded in governing single-handed until September 24, 1941; and though at that date the British forced the creation of the Comité National, *de facto* control still remained wholly in his hands.

What was practically more important, his uncontrolled rule had enabled him to set up his own personal political apparatus, which neither British nor American efforts ever succeeded in breaking up—though not for lack of trying. United States support of Darlan and later of Giraud is still disagreeably fresh in everyone's memory. As for Churchill, his sentiments were neatly summed up by his grumbling roar—late one night, over the double Scotches, when news of the General's latest shenanigans were reported to

him—"Of all the crosses I have to bear, the cross of Lorraine is far and away the heaviest."

Here enters the curious figure of Colonel Passy.

The notorious CSAR (Comité Secret d'Action Révolutionnaire, more familiarly known as the "Cagoulards" or "hooded ones"), a band of democracy-baiting, anti-Semitic reactionaries who were responsible for a whole series of political crimes and provocations between 1934 and 1939, prudently divided itself in 1940 into three sections. One section, in Free France, was led by a Dr. Mene-trel, with headquarters in the apartment of Pétain, whose personal physician and closest adviser he was. The second section, in the Occupied Zone, created under the leadership of the sinister Joseph Darnand a "security militia" that killed hundreds of people and ruthlessly hunted down Jews and *Résistants* for its Gestapo ally. The third section, hedging against an Allied victory, integrated itself skillfully in the inner circles of the Gaullist Resistance. With a sardonic semi-disregard of concealment, the members of this section took as their *noms de guerre* the names of Paris subway stations and installed themselves in London under the leadership of a former collaborator of the Cagoulard chief, Eugène Deloncle, the brilliant and ruthless Colonel de Wavrin, who now chose as his false name "Colonel Passy."

DE GAULLE and Passy set up a sort of Gestapo called the BCRA (Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action) under control of the latter, and began a *Gleichschaltung* of all Free French. The French Resistance comprised some eighty-odd different groups and over four hundred clandestine newspapers. Many were anti-Gaullist; most were non-Gaullist; only a very few were actually Gaullist. To knit all these diverse groups together and make them all subservient to himself was an immense task, but de Gaulle's obstinate ambition, Passy's ruthlessness, and the fact that the British, in de Gaulle, had a bear by the tail and dared not let go, made it a far from hopeless one.

De Gaulle and Passy, furthermore, had two very strong trump cards. They had the exclusive use of the BBC French broadcasts, though many of the men working there were secretly anti-Gaullist. And they had the almost exclusive control of all communications with the escape routes from Occupied France. Indeed, it was not until the spring of 1941 that they would even agree to the participation of the British Intelligence Service; and even then a strange sort of underground warfare was carried on in which the British secret agents in France who ran foul of Passy's men had a way of being picked up soon afterwards by the Gestapo. Yet, for fear of public scandal, this sort of war within a war had to be kept secret. Passy's control also enabled him to see that parachuted arms and money went exclusively to his own organizations.

Control of escape routes prevented anyone getting out of France until he had previously signed an undertaking to support de Gaulle. If a non-Gaullist did succeed in reaching England independently, pressure was immediately brought on him to compromise himself in de Gaulle's favor by making a speech over the BBC. If such a man were unwilling to accept Gaullist employ, he became unemployable elsewhere, obtained his identity card and ration tickets with difficulty if at all, and was forced to subsist on the charity of friends. This was the treatment for political moderates with influence.

For humbler or more radical resisters there were the ill-famed cellars of the BCRA headquarters at 10 Duke Street, London, where they were beaten and tortured in the best Gestapo manner. An occasional death was covered up as suicide—including an alleged hanging from a bracket only some four feet off the floor. When the staff physician, Doctor Ségal, finally refused to certify such cases as accidents any further, he was ruthlessly persecuted by Passy. Concentration camps in Great Britain and the French colonies received those who came out of 10 Duke Street alive and still stubborn. When one man named Brunot escaped and attempted to bring his torturers into a British court,

the case was repeatedly postponed. The courageous editor of *Picture Post* and *World Review*, Edward Hulton, revealed as much as the censorship would permit, and was promptly sued for defamation by the French Committee. The suit was pure bluff; fearing exposure, the committee soon dropped it.

RIVALS and potential rivals of de Gaulle, misled by his rather comic and grotesque appearance (one wit accurately described his usual manner as that of a sulky camel), and his almost unbelievable attitude toward himself and his mission, (e.g., the numerous references to himself as Joan of Arc), made the fatal mistake of underestimating him in much the same way that Hitler's rivals underestimated the latter as a comic figure. One after another de Gaulle defeated and discredited his opponents, often by methods more ruthless than honorable, as in the case of Admiral Muselier. Meanwhile Passy's functionaries were patiently building up their *dossiers*—estimated at the moment of transfer from London to Algiers as already more than one hundred thousand—against non-Gaullist Resistants. These *dossiers*, incidentally, have never been found, and are presumably stored away somewhere waiting for the day when the turn of history will enable them to be put to use.

Enough is already known to indicate the frequency of Passy's practice of ridding himself of underground workers who were or became opposed to de Gaulle by seeing that they fell into Gestapo hands or got rubbed out by more "trustworthy" workers. Yet it may be long before all proof is secured. Even when—as the result of an inside political struggle whereby the Socialists got their hands on the BCRA (renamed successively DGSS, DGER, and finally SDECE)—Passy was put under house arrest, charged with defalcations totaling thirty million francs and various crookednesses involving foreign exchange and the illegal exchange of invalidated banknotes, very little came out. Passy denied nothing, but alleged matters of high policy as explanation, and sat tight. De Gaulle was forced formally to disavow him.

But nothing particularly disagreeable has happened to him.

WHILE on the military and espionage plane every sort of struggle was going on, between the Free French, Vichy, and among the Free French themselves, on the political plane de Gaulle had no particular quarrel with his old chief Pétain. Speaking at a luncheon in London in 1942 about the semi-fascist measures adopted by Pétain under the demagogic title of the "National Revolution," de Gaulle remarked, "But the national revolution is a very good thing. What I criticize in Pétain is that to impose it on the French people he relied on German bayonets. That's just the way to cause it to fail. . . ."

The British and American reservations towards de Gaulle were based neither upon his politically reactionary position nor upon his personal crankiness, but upon his extreme, uncompromising, and stubborn *nationalism*. Pétain, Laval, and Darlan were almost too much for the Germans, but they could not hold a candle for slipperiness and obstinacy to their opposite number in the Allied camp. De Gaulle was willing to accept all the support the Allies could offer, but he remained determined all during the war to use this help not only to liberate France from the Nazi grip but also to turn it against the Allies themselves in order to prevent them from placing any mortgages on his country—and, even more, on himself.

This ultra-nationalist attitude he carried over into the period of his limited power as provisional president of the new Fourth Republic. He embarked at once on a policy of grandeur and glory. Like many military men of surging ambition, de Gaulle is no economist, and he apparently could not get it through his proud head that World War II had reduced France to the status, not merely of a second-rate, but of a third-rate power. He attempted by the Franco-Soviet Pact (despite his undying and lifelong hatred of Communism) to get into a position to hold some sort of balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union. In

view of France's military and economic impotence, he succeeded only in falling between the two stools.

In the colonies, at the cost of military budgets which have been one of the main causes of France's present bankruptcy, he tried to carry on with an arrogant high hand, and by his short-sighted refusal to accord even the most unpostponable concessions, very nearly succeeded in losing France's colonies for her definitively.

When, disregarding all Allied attempts to hold him back, he landed in France soon after the beginning of the Liberation, he found that he was showered with flowers as a symbol, but, as provisional president, he had in his hands none of the real levers of command. The real power was held by the regional Committees of National Liberation and the FFI-FTP armed bands in the countryside, and by the trade unions and the armed factory guards in the cities—all controlled in turn by the French Communist party. There is considerable reason to believe that the real reason behind the gallant but not otherwise particularly necessary Paris uprising was to get possession of the *mairies*, the arms stocks, the newspaper printing plants, etc., before de Gaulle's forces could enter and do so. The Communists, following at the time the Kremlin policy of avoiding socialist revolution while infiltrating the capitalist state, gradually passed the top power to de Gaulle on a silver platter. In return they exacted concessions which left the aspiring dictator not sole holder of power, but merely one component in a coalition.

The main political parties, the Socialist, the Communist, and the Popular Republican Movement (MRP), had not the faintest intention of surrendering to any man on horseback even if it was a white horse, or to his "strong state." When de Gaulle saw that he would be unable to impose his ideas on the new constitution being prepared by the Constituent Assembly, that the economic situation and the food crisis accompanying it was becoming such an inextricable mess that no government could unscramble it or make headway against it and must necessari-

ly emerge discredited, he decided prudently *reculer pour mieux sauter* (to step back in order to jump farther). Announcing, with a disingenuousness that has few parallels, that everything was fine now and his task safely done, he resigned.

The tactic was judicious. Through the MRP and especially through the Minister of Armed Forces, the General continued to control the officers' corps of the army, his main support. On the other hand, he no longer shared responsibility for the havoc or resentment the three main parliamentary parties were creating. While waiting for a France driven to despair by hunger and inflation to turn to him once more, he could quietly lay his plans for return and snipe in occasional speeches at the parliamentary democracy he hated.

SUCH, then, is the record of Charles de Gaulle. It would suggest that anyone who was surprised when he first formed his *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (RPF) and called imperiously on parliament to dissolve itself simply hadn't been keeping his eye on the General.

But all this still does not necessarily mean that de Gaulle is a fascist chief of a fascist party. Nor does it answer the questions: Will he now come to power in France? And if so, will he establish a totalitarian régime, complete with anti-Semitism and all the other horrors?

To answer these questions, it is first necessary to review just what fascism is, and, in particular, to distinguish it from classic reaction.

Fascism, we know, is neither an accidental nor a national phenomenon, but the logical last step in a whole historic-economic process such as can occur in any country. Its preconditions are: a deep, violent, and extended economic crisis; a broad radicalization, showing itself as a drive for socialism among the industrial workers and taking more confused and disparate forms among the urban and rural middle classes; a state of confusion and divided counsel among the country's business and financial leaders, with a resultant

tendency to maneuver and vacillate; in the next stage, a deepening of the economic crisis, provoking the industrial workers to inconclusive strikes and other actions whose failure leads them to discouragement and indifference; an extreme ferment among the badly hit middle-classes, sending them pendulum-wise back and forth from Left to Right, looking for some solution, preferably a miraculous one, and ending in their willingness to undertake the most desperate and violent measures; and finally a definite turning away by the middle class from all Leftist and democratic parties because of their hesitant and inconclusive policies. These are the circumstances that permit a fascist party to mushroom into power. All these objective preconditions, save the definitive last one, exist in France today. Yet the subjective factor, the mass fascist party, no more exists than it did in the immediate pre-war period.

THE word fascism, largely as a result of being hysterically employed for the last twelve years as an *omnium-gatherum* term of abuse by the Communists and their friends, is not clearly understood in the United States. It is sharply distinguishable from classic reaction by three characteristics. First, in the period of its rise to power, it depends on a genuine plebeian mass base rather than on police measures from above. Second, its program is radical and pseudo-revolutionary, characterized above all by anti-capitalist, anti-monopolist demagoguery. Third, it sets as its goal and carries out as soon as it reaches power the total extirpation of any and all independent labor organizations. To appreciate this last distinction, one need only compare the classic-reactionary dictatorship of Primo de Rivera with the fascist dictatorship of Franco. Under Primo de Rivera, the Spanish Socialist party and its trade-union federation, UGT, were legal, and Largo Caballero, a left-wing socialist, was a Councillor of State. Even under the Czarist police state, unions, the labor press, and cooperatives had a certain degree of liberty.

In the light of these considerations, it is

not possible to call the RPF a fascist party. The French people suffered so bloodily and so recently from the impositions of a foreign fascism that even the most despairing members of a ruined middle class are wary of any domestic fascism in open form.

There is no anti-capitalist demagoguery in de Gaulle's program; he has no avowed positive economic program. The one positive plank in his platform is nationalist chauvinism. The only other important ones are purely negative: opposition to the free play of parliamentary democracy and to the continued legal existence of the French Communist party. Toward the trade unions, he has the classic-reactionary idea of controlling them rather than the classic-fascist idea of annihilating them, first by private armed bands and then by ruthless exercise of state power. Far from being a mass-supported upstart forcing his plebeian private army and his pseudo-radical solutions upon business and financial leaders who distrust and half-fear him and hesitate to pay the high price he demands for establishing social peace, de Gaulle himself belongs to these ruling circles, and they distrust him only to the extent that he seems to them at times a little too headstrong and impatient.

The real parallel to de Gaulle in Weimar Germany was not the National Socialist Hitler, but the straight nationalist, Hugenberg. His French precursor was not the demagogic, pseudo-revolutionary fascist Doriot of the Parti Populaire Français, but the law-and-order reactionary nationalist, de la Rocque, of the Croix de Feu. In sum, de Gaulle is a classic-reactionary nationalist, surrounded though he is by the mystique of the anti-Nazi Resistance.

This is not to say that there are not plenty of genuine fascists in the RPF. There are; and the future development of that movement may throw them into positions of power, either by a split from the RPF, or by a transformation of the movement and its chief. And as long as there exist, on the one hand, all the objective conditions for the formation and growth of fascism in France, and, on the other, important fascist tend-

encies within the RPF, it would be hazardous to exclude the possibility of such a transformation.

AT PRESENT many Jews are members of the RPF; and neither de Gaulle nor the movement as a whole shows any overt signs of anti-Semitism. Exaggerated though his nationalism remains, de Gaulle appears finally to have got it through his head that the salvation of France depends primarily on the United States. And the United States would not condone political anti-Semitism in France. Also, the fact that no outstanding French Communist party leader is Jewish has spared France the linking of anti-Communism with anti-Semitism.

But it would be tragic naivety to trust to the good will of one man. The deepening of the economic crisis has already produced among all layers of the French population a dangerously widespread xenophobia, sadly aided by the competition between the Gaullists and the Communists as to who can be the more nationalistic. In the recent strikes, foreigners, especially Spaniards and Poles, were signally persecuted. This situation bodes ill for Jews, especially those recently come to France from East Europe. The broader development of genuinely fascist tendencies within the RPF would produce a parallel development of anti-Semitism; and no one can say to what extent de Gaulle would resist it. If the present outlook is still not bad, the fact remains that optimism must remain somewhat cautious and conditional.

THERE remains the question: Can de Gaulle come to power in the immediate future? Precisely because of the non-fascist nature of de Gaulle and his RPF, his assumption of power would be relatively smooth. He himself has openly stated that under the present Constitution there are "at least two" quite legal methods. In May the National Assembly, having completed eighteen statutory months, can be dissolved by the government after two easily provokable cabinet crises. Or the Assembly and the Council of the Republic can, by two majority

votes (in the Assembly, 309 out of 617—for comparison, Blum just missed with 300, Schuman rode in with 412) three months apart, amend the Constitution to permit them to dissolve themselves. A bill based on this decision becomes operative if voted by two-thirds of the Assembly or three-fifths of both houses. If the majorities are less, it goes to referendum—something de Gaulle, like his model, Louis Napoléon, would dearly love. If time presses, the spirit of the Constitution can be circumvented by using the letter of Article Six, which states: "The duration of the powers of each Assembly is determined by law"—i.e., a simple majority vote of the Assembly can terminate it by passing a law to that effect. In any of these variants, de Gaulle would insist on a parallel change in the election laws to replace the present very democratic system of proportional representation by a straight majority system.

The Gaullist threat to French democracy, therefore, is less that of an immediate military *coup d'état*—though that and a resultant civil war are perfectly possible under circumstances of extreme crisis—than of a steady legal climb to power, modifying the Constitution from its present relatively democratic form into the irresponsible-executive or "strong state" form that the General needs for his personal power—the whole process crowned perhaps by a final little *coup* once the new regime had all the threads of command in hand.

If well advised and not given his hot and hasty head, de Gaulle would doubtless endeavor to move against the Left with such gradualism that it would never be provoked to sharp counter-measures. Trade unions, for instance, would probably not be outlawed, but slowly "controlled," first by backing, say, Jouhaux against Frachon, then by replacing Jouhaux by some even more right-wing leader, and finally by absorbing the unions themselves into the state apparatus. The tactic against the French Communist party would presumably be, though sharper, still of a sufficiently gradualist nature to avoid an open armed clash until the Communists be-

came too weak to resist. Once they were out of the way, the General could feel free to turn on the Socialists and finish them off in their turn. And so on.

Could he get away with it? The main obstacle would be the millions of industrial workers by whom he is cordially hated. But they remain, in their vast majority, under the leadership of the French Communist party. And judging from the lamentable spectacle that party's leadership has just offered by its irresponsible strike policy—irresponsible, that is, to the French workers, but all too responsible to Moscow—it seems only too likely that the working class would retreat before de Gaulle step by step until, as in 1933 Germany, it would go down without a struggle.

WHAT is of more immediate bearing on de Gaulle's chances is the attitude of business and financial leaders of France and of governmental policy-makers in the United States.

Immediately after the municipal elections, with their further polarization of the political extremes, it was fashionable to write off the "third force," or Center coalition of the Socialists, MRP, and the non-Gaullist Right, as an impotent stop-gap. So it is, in historical terms—but not necessarily in the immediate future. It has passed its first test of strength, the November-December strike wave, with flying colors. If it flunks the next test, that of restoring France's shattered economic balance, it still can be asked whether any strong man *à la* Hitler could do better. It should not be forgotten that Hitler at his accession to power had a powerful and unimpaired industrial machine at his disposal; all he had to do was give it a task, and for that he needed only to smash all labor organizations and launch into production for war.

France, on the contrary, has a wrecked and worn-out industrial plant, coal and manpower ceilings on production that are difficult if not impossible to break through, a hopeless foreign-trade deficit, an unbalanceable budget, and an inflation curable only by measures of such drastic nature that it is doubtful if any conservative government would dare undertake them. It is not strong-man brutalities but Marshall Plan dollars that alone can keep France's economy creaking along.

From the viewpoint of internal social peace, a de Gaulle is indicated only as a last resort. His accession to power would seem a provocation to labor and would throw into opposition even those workingmen who follow Blum and Jouhaux. His strong-arm methods, if he were too hasty, could well provoke such violent reactions as to lead to the gravest social disorders, and even civil war. And from the American viewpoint, de Gaulle's ultra-nationalism and stiff-necked determination to play an independent rôle would make him far less easy to collaborate with than the more pliant politicians of the present coalition.

Hence it would seem safe to predict that the men who determine policy in both France and the United States will continue—barring unforeseeable and spectacular events—to support the present Left-Center coalition, while holding de Gaulle in reserve for a grave crisis where his special strong-man talents would seem indicated. In any case, de Gaulle himself is unlikely to make his real bid for power until the putting into operation of the Marshall Plan permits him to back up his ringing but somewhat empty words with some solid improvement in the economic situation. By May, his prospects should be much clearer than in this grim winter of discontent.